

JCS68 U.S. PTO
09/24/99

BOX APPLICATION
Assistant Commissioner
for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY EXPRESS MAIL

"EXPRESS MAIL" Mailing Label No. EL 269 320 064 US

Date of Deposit: September 24, 1999

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231

Type or Print Name Carolyn Bova

Carolyn Bova
Signature

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PAIRING PROVIDERS
WITH CONSUMERS OF ONLINE GOODS AND SERVICES**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Technical Field of the Invention

5 The present invention generally relates to the field of global communication networks (*e.g.*, Internet) and, in particular, to an online system and method that pairs or matches, in a customized, intelligent manner, users of a global communication network with providers of goods and services, utilizing a unique domain name request and linking service and an intelligent system of comparing and matching users with providers of such goods and services, ultimately facilitating a business transaction between said user and said provider(s).

Description of Background and Related Art

5
10
15
An ever-increasing number of online providers of goods and services, coupled with unprecedented and exponential growth of online consumer traffic, has placed consumers of online goods and services at risk of experiencing information and advertising overload. Every day, more than three thousand domain names are registered through Network Solutions, Inc. ("NSI") for just the ".com", ".net" and ".org" versions of domain names. Moreover, tens of thousands of new users join the Internet each day across the world, a rate which even according to the most skeptical predictions will continue to experience exponential growth. With less than half of all companies in the United States currently offering products and services online, the real crush of online commerce has yet to be experienced. Indeed, it is estimated that over 1.5 million small businesses alone will be offering goods or services online by the year 2002.

20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995
1000
1005
1010
1015
1020
1025
1030
1035
1040
1045
1050
1055
1060
1065
1070
1075
1080
1085
1090
1095
1100
1105
1110
1115
1120
1125
1130
1135
1140
1145
1150
1155
1160
1165
1170
1175
1180
1185
1190
1195
1200
1205
1210
1215
1220
1225
1230
1235
1240
1245
1250
1255
1260
1265
1270
1275
1280
1285
1290
1295
1300
1305
1310
1315
1320
1325
1330
1335
1340
1345
1350
1355
1360
1365
1370
1375
1380
1385
1390
1395
1400
1405
1410
1415
1420
1425
1430
1435
1440
1445
1450
1455
1460
1465
1470
1475
1480
1485
1490
1495
1500
1505
1510
1515
1520
1525
1530
1535
1540
1545
1550
1555
1560
1565
1570
1575
1580
1585
1590
1595
1600
1605
1610
1615
1620
1625
1630
1635
1640
1645
1650
1655
1660
1665
1670
1675
1680
1685
1690
1695
1700
1705
1710
1715
1720
1725
1730
1735
1740
1745
1750
1755
1760
1765
1770
1775
1780
1785
1790
1795
1800
1805
1810
1815
1820
1825
1830
1835
1840
1845
1850
1855
1860
1865
1870
1875
1880
1885
1890
1895
1900
1905
1910
1915
1920
1925
1930
1935
1940
1945
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
1985
1990
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
2025
2030
2035
2040
2045
2050
2055
2060
2065
2070
2075
2080
2085
2090
2095
2100
2105
2110
2115
2120
2125
2130
2135
2140
2145
2150
2155
2160
2165
2170
2175
2180
2185
2190
2195
2200
2205
2210
2215
2220
2225
2230
2235
2240
2245
2250
2255
2260
2265
2270
2275
2280
2285
2290
2295
2300
2305
2310
2315
2320
2325
2330
2335
2340
2345
2350
2355
2360
2365
2370
2375
2380
2385
2390
2395
2400
2405
2410
2415
2420
2425
2430
2435
2440
2445
2450
2455
2460
2465
2470
2475
2480
2485
2490
2495
2500
2505
2510
2515
2520
2525
2530
2535
2540
2545
2550
2555
2560
2565
2570
2575
2580
2585
2590
2595
2600
2605
2610
2615
2620
2625
2630
2635
2640
2645
2650
2655
2660
2665
2670
2675
2680
2685
2690
2695
2700
2705
2710
2715
2720
2725
2730
2735
2740
2745
2750
2755
2760
2765
2770
2775
2780
2785
2790
2795
2800
2805
2810
2815
2820
2825
2830
2835
2840
2845
2850
2855
2860
2865
2870
2875
2880
2885
2890
2895
2900
2905
2910
2915
2920
2925
2930
2935
2940
2945
2950
2955
2960
2965
2970
2975
2980
2985
2990
2995
3000
3005
3010
3015
3020
3025
3030
3035
3040
3045
3050
3055
3060
3065
3070
3075
3080
3085
3090
3095
3100
3105
3110
3115
3120
3125
3130
3135
3140
3145
3150
3155
3160
3165
3170
3175
3180
3185
3190
3195
3200
3205
3210
3215
3220
3225
3230
3235
3240
3245
3250
3255
3260
3265
3270
3275
3280
3285
3290
3295
3300
3305
3310
3315
3320
3325
3330
3335
3340
3345
3350
3355
3360
3365
3370
3375
3380
3385
3390
3395
3400
3405
3410
3415
3420
3425
3430
3435
3440
3445
3450
3455
3460
3465
3470
3475
3480
3485
3490
3495
3500
3505
3510
3515
3520
3525
3530
3535
3540
3545
3550
3555
3560
3565
3570
3575
3580
3585
3590
3595
3600
3605
3610
3615
3620
3625
3630
3635
3640
3645
3650
3655
3660
3665
3670
3675
3680
3685
3690
3695
3700
3705
3710
3715
3720
3725
3730
3735
3740
3745
3750
3755
3760
3765
3770
3775
3780
3785
3790
3795
3800
3805
3810
3815
3820
3825
3830
3835
3840
3845
3850
3855
3860
3865
3870
3875
3880
3885
3890
3895
3900
3905
3910
3915
3920
3925
3930
3935
3940
3945
3950
3955
3960
3965
3970
3975
3980
3985
3990
3995
4000
4005
4010
4015
4020
4025
4030
4035
4040
4045
4050
4055
4060
4065
4070
4075
4080
4085
4090
4095
4100
4105
4110
4115
4120
4125
4130
4135
4140
4145
4150
4155
4160
4165
4170
4175
4180
4185
4190
4195
4200
4205
4210
4215
4220
4225
4230
4235
4240
4245
4250
4255
4260
4265
4270
4275
4280
4285
4290
4295
4300
4305
4310
4315
4320
4325
4330
4335
4340
4345
4350
4355
4360
4365
4370
4375
4380
4385
4390
4395
4400
4405
4410
4415
4420
4425
4430
4435
4440
4445
4450
4455
4460
4465
4470
4475
4480
4485
4490
4495
4500
4505
4510
4515
4520
4525
4530
4535
4540
4545
4550
4555
4560
4565
4570
4575
4580
4585
4590
4595
4600
4605
4610
4615
4620
4625
4630
4635
4640
4645
4650
4655
4660
4665
4670
4675
4680
4685
4690
4695
4700
4705
4710
4715
4720
4725
4730
4735
4740
4745
4750
4755
4760
4765
4770
4775
4780
4785
4790
4795
4800
4805
4810
4815
4820
4825
4830
4835
4840
4845
4850
4855
4860
4865
4870
4875
4880
4885
4890
4895
4900
4905
4910
4915
4920
4925
4930
4935
4940
4945
4950
4955
4960
4965
4970
4975
4980
4985
4990
4995
5000
5005
5010
5015
5020
5025
5030
5035
5040
5045
5050
5055
5060
5065
5070
5075
5080
5085
5090
5095
5100
5105
5110
5115
5120
5125
5130
5135
5140
5145
5150
5155
5160
5165
5170
5175
5180
5185
5190
5195
5200
5205
5210
5215
5220
5225
5230
5235
5240
5245
5250
5255
5260
5265
5270
5275
5280
5285
5290
5295
5300
5305
5310
5315
5320
5325
5330
5335
5340
5345
5350
5355
5360
5365
5370
5375
5380
5385
5390
5395
5400
5405
5410
5415
5420
5425
5430
5435
5440
5445
5450
5455
5460
5465
5470
5475
5480
5485
5490
5495
5500
5505
5510
5515
5520
5525
5530
5535
5540
5545
5550
5555
5560
5565
5570
5575
5580
5585
5590
5595
5600
5605
5610
5615
5620
5625
5630
5635
5640
5645
5650
5655
5660
5665
5670
5675
5680
5685
5690
5695
5700
5705
5710
5715
5720
5725
5730
5735
5740
5745
5750
5755
5760
5765
5770
5775
5780
5785
5790
5795
5800
5805
5810
5815
5820
5825
5830
5835
5840
5845
5850
5855
5860
5865
5870
5875
5880
5885
5890
5895
5900
5905
5910
5915
5920
5925
5930
5935
5940
5945
5950
5955
5960
5965
5970
5975
5980
5985
5990
5995
6000
6005
6010
6015
6020
6025
6030
6035
6040
6045
6050
6055
6060
6065
6070
6075
6080
6085
6090
6095
6100
6105
6110
6115
6120
6125
6130
6135
6140
6145
6150
6155
6160
6165
6170
6175
6180
6185
6190
6195
6200
6205
6210
6215
6220
6225
6230
6235
6240
6245
6250
6255
6260
6265
6270
6275
6280
6285
6290
6295
6300
6305
6310
6315
6320
6325
6330
6335
6340
6345
6350
6355
6360
6365
6370
6375
6380
6385
6390
6395
6400
6405
6410
6415
6420
6425
6430
6435
6440
6445
6450
6455
6460
6465
6470
6475
6480
6485
6490
6495
6500
6505
6510
6515
6520
6525
6530
6535
6540
6545
6550
6555
6560
6565
6570
6575
6580
6585
6590
6595
6600
6605
6610
6615
6620
6625
6630
6635
6640
6645
6650
6655
6660
6665
6670
6675
6680
6685
6690
6695
6700
6705
6710
6715
6720
6725
6730
6735
6740
6745
6750
6755
6760
6765
6770
6775
6780
6785
6790
6795
6800
6805
6810
6815
6820
6825
6830
6835
6840
6845
6850
6855
6860
6865
6870
6875
6880
6885
6890
6895
6900
6905
6910
6915
6920
6925
6930
6935
6940
6945
6950
6955
6960
6965
6970
6975
6980
6985
6990
6995
7000
7005
7010
7015
7020
7025
7030
7035
7040
7045
7050
7055
7060
7065
7070
7075
7080
7085
7090
7095
7100
7105
7110
7115
7120
7125
7130
7135
7140
7145
7150
7155
7160
7165
7170
7175
7180
7185
7190
7195
7200
7205
7210
7215
7220
7225
7230
7235
7240
7245
7250
7255
7260
7265
7270
7275
7280
7285
7290
7295
7300
7305
7310
7315
7320
7325
7330
7335
7340
7345
7350
7355
7360
7365
7370
7375
7380
7385
7390
7395
7400
7405
7410
7415
7420
7425
7430
7435
7440
7445
7450
7455
7460
7465
7470
7475
7480
7485
7490
7495
7500
7505
7510
7515
7520
7525
7530
7535
7540
7545
7550
7555
7560
7565
7570
7575
7580
7585
7590
7595
7600
7605
7610
7615
7620
7625
7630
7635
7640
7645
7650
7655
7660
7665
7670
7675
7680
7685
7690
7695
7700
7705
7710
7715
7720
7725
7730
7735
7740
7745
7750
7755
7760
7765
7770
7775
7780
7785
7790
7795
7800
7805
7810
7815
7820
7825
7830
7835
7840
7845
7850
7855
7860
7865
7870
7875
7880
7885
7890
7895
7900
7905
7910
7915
7920
7925
7930
7935
7940
7945
7950
7955
7960
7965
7970
7975
7980
7985
7990
7995
8000
8005
8010
8015
8020
8025
8030
8035
8040
8045
8050
8055
8060
8065
8070
8075
8080
8085
8090
8095
8100
8105
8110
8115
8120
8125
8130
8135
8140
8145
8150
8155
8160
8165
8170
8175
8180
8185
8190
8195
8200
8205
8210
8215
8220
8225
8230
8235
8240
8245
8250
8255
8260
8265
8270
8275
8280
8285
8290
8295
8300
8305
8310
8315
8320
8325
8330
8335
8340
8345
8350
8355
8360
8365
8370
8375
8380
8385
8390
8395
8400
8405
8410
8415
8420
8425
8430
8435
8440
8445
8450
8455
8460
8465
8470
8475
8480
8485
8490
8495
8500
8505
8510
8515
8520
8525
8530
8535
8540
8545
8550
8555
8560
8565
8570
8575
8580
8585
8590
8595
8600
8605
8610
8615
8620
8625
8630
8635
8640
8645
8650
8655
8660
8665
8670
8675
8680
8685
8690
8695
8700
8705
8710
8715
8720
8725
8730
8735
8740
8745
8750
8755
8760
8765
8770
8775
8780
8785
8790
8795
8800
8805
8810
8815
8820
8825
8830
8835
8840
8845
8850
8855
8860
8865
8870
8875
8880
8885
8890
8895
8900
8905
8910
8915
8920
8925
8930
8935
8940
8945
8950
8955
8960
8965
8970
8975
8980
8985
8990
8995
9000
9005
9010
9015
9020
9025
9030
9035
9040
9045
9050
9055
9060
9065
9070
9075
9080
9085
9090
9095
9100
9105
9110
9115
9120
9125
9130
9135
9140
9145
9150
9155
9160
9165
9170
9175
9180
9185
9190
9195
9200
9205
9210
9215
9220
9225
9230
9235
9240
9245
9250
9255
9260
9265
9270
9275
9280
9285
9290
9295
9300
9305
9310
9315
9320
9325
9330
9335
9340
9345
9350
9355
9360
9365
9370
9375
9380
9385
9390
9395
9400
9405
9410
9415
9420
9425
9430
9435
9440
9445
9450
9455
9460
9465
9470
9475
9480
9485
9490
9495
9500
9505
9510
9515
9520
9525
9530
9535
9540
9545
9550
9555
9560
9565
9570
9575
9580
9585
9590
9595
9600
9605
9610
9615
9620
9625
9630
9635
9640
9645
9650
9655
9660
9665
9670
9675
9680
9685
9690
9695
9700
9705
9710
9715
9720
9725
9730
9735
9740
9745
9750
9755
9760
9765
9770
9775
9780
9785
9790
9795
9800
9805
9810
9815
9820
9825
9830
9835
9840
9845
9850
9855
9860
9865
9870
9875
9880
9885
9890
9895
9900
9905
9910
9915
9920
9925
9930
9935
9940
9945
9950
9955
9960
9965
9970
9975
9980
9985
9990
9995
10000
10005
10010
10015
10020
10025
10030
10035
10040
10045
10050
10055
10060
10065
10070
10075
10080
10085
10090
10095
10100
10105
10110
10115
10120
10125
10130
10135
10140
10145
10150
10155
10160
10165
10170
10175
10180
10185
10190
10195

almost ubiquitous use of universal resource locators (URLs) in advertising and promotional materials, known sources of goods or services are not always located at the ".com" version of their famous marks or names. In other words, for example, going to "unitedairlines.com" might not always produce the desired result, since, for a variety of reasons, United Airlines' online presence might actually be located at "united-airlines.com", "united_airlines.com", "unitedairlines.net", "ua.com", or the like. After several attempts, one discovers that the site is actually located at "ual.com". Additionally, even once the correct URL is determined, the web presences for many well-known sources for traditional goods and services are little more than online advertisements, often lacking true e-commerce functions (*i.e.* online sales) capability. Accordingly, reliance on this method of identifying online sources of desired goods and services is limited at best.

The latter approach, using search engines and the like to locate sources of goods and services, is practically useless to would-be consumers due to the imprecise and voluminous nature of results produced by same. For example, a recent search for "airline reservations" on the popular meta search engine DogPile® (www.dogpile.com) produced 27,976 results ("hits"). Not only does such an example illustrate the overwhelming volume of information produced in response to virtually any search request, but a quick, more detailed, review of the first 20 or so hits (purportedly ranked in order of "relevance" to the

search request) revealed that a number of such "relevant" hits were not sources of such services, but were actually mere uses of one or both of the key words of the search request within other, unrelated contexts. Moreover, even where a potential consumer is successful in locating a source from search results produced by a search engine, the reputation and reliability of such source is often unclear. Accordingly, use of meta search engines in an attempt to locate desired goods and services online is as often frustrating as it is ultimately unsuccessful.

Even assuming proper identification and location of a desired provider is ultimately achieved by a consumer, consummation of one or more business transactions between a consumer and a provider is often unnecessarily complicated, sometimes to the point that the proposed transaction is precluded altogether, due, at least in part, to unfamiliar functionality or appearance of the provider's site or the current requirement that basic information needed to complete a business transaction (*e.g.*, payment instructions, delivery and shipping information, purchase preferences) must be repeatedly and manually provided by the consumer at each provider site. It is estimated that, currently, up to 40% of potential online transactions are ultimately not completed due to interactivity problems encountered by the consumer at the provider's site. Moreover, existing automated search systems capable of simply locating providers of goods and services (*e.g.*, Sherlock™ from Apple

Corp.) do not also provide a consumer with comparative pricing and availability or other comparative information regarding such goods and services. As an example, it is of little value to know that companies A, B & C offer limousine service in Manhattan. What is much more valuable to a potential consumer of such services is to immediately know that companies A & C, but not company B, have limousines available for the time period the consumer desires, and that company A offers that service at a lower price than company C.

The foregoing dilemma provides an opportunity for a unique system and method to serve as an intelligent intermediary between the consumers and the providers of online goods and services. To address this opportunity, there is a need for a system and method that, in response to an extremely simple and intuitive user request, can: (1) intelligently select and identify one or more, and preferably several, reputable and reliable providers of desired goods and services from which a potential consumer may choose one or more particular providers; and (2) provide the potential consumer with comparative pricing and availability (and, if needed other) information about the identified providers' goods and services so as to facilitate a fully-informed decision by the potential consumer as to which one or more providers with whom they desire to transact business.

In addition, there is often a need for a potential consumer to be informed regarding providers of logically-related goods and services. For example, a consumer of hotel reservations in Los Angeles will also likely have a need for providers of: rental cars; directions in Los Angeles; airline reservations, and the like.

There is also the need for such a system to include a common database of information regarding each consumer. Such a database would operate to eliminate repeated and manual provision of basic information required to complete online transactions. There is further a need for a system and method that provides a variety of other useful, ancillary features to the primary service of pairing online consumers and providers of goods and services, such as a feature that maintains the privacy of a consumer while they are communicating with the providers and a feature which selectively and confidentially shares personal information (*e.g.*, credit card account information) of the consumer with an approved provider to facilitate the desired online transaction. Here again, a common database could facilitate the provision of such ancillary services.

Such a system would ideally operate not only with existing computer and telecommunications devices (*e.g.*, pagers, hand-held personal communication devices), but also with future Internet-capable devices (*e.g.*, vehicle-based telematic devices) for accessing a global communications network, providing a consistent and familiar interactive

experience with a consumer regardless of how, and through what communication means, the system was accessed. The system would also ideally accommodate and interact with global positioning system-based applications, traditional and biometric security devices and voice activation/recognition and audio response systems. As more greatly detailed below, the foregoing and other needs are satisfied by the system and method of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5
10
15
The present invention comprises a system and method that operates as an automated, intelligent intermediary between a consumer and a provider of goods and services. More specifically, the system and method of the present invention operate to receive a request initiated by a consumer and transmitted over a global communication network, like the Internet, and process such request in an intelligent way to match that consumer with one or more providers of goods or services represented (or logically-suggested) by the request. Once identified and selected, the system preferably facilitates completion of one or more business transactions between the consumer and the provider(s) in a way which eliminates repeated and manual provision of basic transaction parameters (e.g., payment instructions, delivery/shipping information, purchase preferences) required to complete such transactions. Importantly, using the system and method of the present invention a consumer is provided with a consistent and familiar interactive experience, regardless of the manner in which the consumer communicates with the system, or the provider(s) intelligently selected by the system and with which the consumer transacts business.

The primary components of the system and method of the present invention are: the common database; the name request system and name linking policy; the selection and

pairing system; the intelligent referral system; and the selective information sharing and information protection system. Although the term "consumer" is used throughout this application, it is noted that for purposes of the application the term "consumer" shall encompass both individual users as well as business ventures and enterprises of all kinds. Indeed, currently, the largest growing segment of transactions facilitated over a global communication systems like the Internet are business to business transactions. In business circumstances where the ability to immediately determine comparative pricing and availability information is critical, the system and method of the present invention would be invaluable.

An important feature of the system and method of the present invention is its use of a natural, intuitive name request system and name linking policy which allows a consumer to use an extremely simple and intuitive approach to requesting desired goods and services. In one embodiment of the name request system, a request is provided to the system using a simplistic and intuitive common domain name component (*e.g.*, INEED), coupled with a specific object (*e.g.*, A HOTEL ROOM) to form a domain name ("ineedahotelroom.com") which is entered into a browser or other means of interacting (*e.g.*, a pager) with a global communications network such as the Internet.

Using this embodiment of the name request system, the system is fed any variety of requests from potential consumers by allowing them to simply and intuitively express their desire for goods or services using the simplistic format to form a URL or domain name. So, whether a consumer desires an automobile (*e.g.*, ineedanewcar.com or ineedausedcar.com); a doctor (*e.g.*, ineedadoctor.net or ineedaphysician.com or ineedanobgyn.com); temporary transportation (*e.g.*, ineedalimousine.com, ineedataxi.net or ineedacab.com); a computer (*e.g.*, ineedacomputer.net); lodging (*e.g.*, ineedahotel.net, ineedhotelreservations.net or ineedahotelroom.com); directions (*e.g.*, ineeddirections.com or ineedamap.net); companionship (ineedadate.net); employment (*e.g.*, ineedajob.net); or gifts (*e.g.*, ineedagift.net or ineedaflorist.com), the unique name request system of the present invention provides an immensely simplistic and, more importantly, intuitive entry into the system.

It is noted that by using a combination of a variety of top level domain name extensions and an intra-system search engine associated with each domain of the system, the name linking policy of the system will direct visitors requesting a good or service via slight variations on the "INeed" domain name common format to the appropriate web presence within the system. Accordingly, whether a consumer enters "inneedahotel.net", "inneedhotelreservations.com" or "inneedahotelroom.com", the consumer will be provided

5
10
15
with the appropriate web presence for the system. The feature also eliminates the consumer's frustration with attempting to determine the proper top-level domain name extension (*e.g.*, ".com") to use. Once a consumer has reached any domain in the system, the consumer seeking another domain of the system can reach the appropriate web presence of the system regardless of the top-level extension used by the consumer. The intra-system search engine feature alleviates the frustration many online consumers currently experience by placing the burden on the system to determine the actual source site of interest (*e.g.*, ineedahotelroom.com) from a variety of potential requests (*e.g.*, ineedahotel.net, ineedahotelroom.net, ineedamotel.net, etc.), rather than forcing the consumer to attempt several variations to locate the desired source site. If the system cannot locate a responsive domain, or the system-selected site is not satisfactory, the consumer will be referred to a default domain within the system for interaction with a concierge staff capable of assisting the consumer.

15
Other embodiments of the name request system and name linking policy allow the consumer to be more vague about his or her request for goods or services. For example, the system is capable of processing consumer requests in which the object component of the domain name is not a specific item. Examples include: "ineedtravel", in response to which a consumer might be provided access to maps, hotel reservations, airline

reservations, driving directions, tourist information and the like; and "ineedfinancialservices", in response to which a consumer might be presented with everything from providers of online banking services and investment products to financial consultants, tax attorneys to stock and mutual fund brokers.

5 It is noted that the foregoing examples have been extremely limited in the interest
of space, and that the system and method of the present invention functions optimally
through the reservation and use of many hundreds, or even thousands, of domain names
based upon one or more common formats. It is further noted that although the "INEED"
common format has been described in some detail herein, other common formats are
10 contemplated and encompassed by the present invention, including, by way of illustration
and not limitation, "INEEDA", "INEEDAN", "IWANT", "IWANTA", "IWANTAN",
"GETME", "GETMEA", "GETMEAN", "FINDME", "FINDMEA", "FINDMEAN" and
the like. Moreover, foreign language-based common formats (*e.g.*, "YOQUIERO",
"NECESITO") are also contemplated and encompassed by the present invention.

15 In response to receiving a domain name produced using the name request system,
the system of the present invention selects at least one provider which is logically related
to the subject matter represented by the domain name. Thereafter, the system operates to
provide information about the selected at least one provider to the consumer, wherein the

consumer selects one or more providers from the selected at least one provider to communicate therewith. It is noted that the system can receive a consumer request via any suitable means of communication, including, without limitation, electronic mail, short message services (SMS) (*e.g.*, "instant message") and web browsers.

Once a selection is made by the consumer, the system facilitates completion of a transaction between the consumer and the selected provider(s). In a preferred embodiment, the consumer is provided with detailed information (*e.g.*, products/services descriptions, comparative pricing and availability information, photographs, video demonstrations, etc.) about the goods and services available from the selected provider(s) through the system's web presence. An important feature of this embodiment is that information about the selected provider(s) is provided seamlessly to the consumer via the web presence of the system using a common format. This feature not only produces a level of comfort and familiarity in the consumer regarding the system's functions, look and feel, but also precludes a consumer from having to familiarize himself or herself with the varying formats or organization of the various provider(s). The feature: (1) cultivates loyalty with the consumers for the system; and (2) boosts sales of the provider(s) since consumer sales are not lost when potential consumers are unwilling or unable to learn or use the provider's own, often foreign or confusing, function, look and feel.

5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995

In the preferred embodiment, the transaction between the consumer and the provider(s) is further facilitated by the system through the use of a common database including all of the consumer's financial information (*e.g.*, credit card numbers), shipping or delivery information, buying preferences, and the like, preventing a consumer from having to repeatedly enter such routine and duplicative information into multiple provider sites; and enabling the system to optimize presentation of information generated by the system to the consumer based upon predetermined criteria. This component of the system can be likened to a "hub-and-spoke" model, in which all the web presences of the system (spokes) have access to, and can utilize information on a predetermined and selective basis from, a single common database (hub) containing the above-identified basic information. Use of this feature of the system allows a consumer to enter such information a single time, yet repeatedly use such information on a predetermined and selective basis to facilitate transactions with any provider identified and selected using the system and method of the present invention.

15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995

In another, less preferred embodiment of the system, the consumer is provided with an electronic link (*e.g.*, hot link), if available, to access, and preferably facilitate an online transaction with, the selected provider(s). If such electronic link is not available, the system could also use electronic mail or other, more traditional contact information (*e.g.*,

5
10
15
telephone numbers, addresses) to facilitate commerce between the consumer and the provider(s). Such information can be provided in a variety of formats, including, without limitation, a customized web page sent to the requesting consumer. It is noted that this embodiment of the system is less preferred since once the consumer uses a more traditional method of contacting the selected provider(s) (e.g., via hot link or toll-free telephone number), the transaction facilitation components (e.g., common database and comparative pricing and availability information) of the system are no longer readily-available to the consumer. For example, using the less preferred embodiment the consumer will likely be required to repeatedly and manually provide such provider(s) with the basic transaction information (e.g., payment instructions, delivery and shipping information and purchase preferences) despite the fact that such information already exists in the common database of the system, and will not have access to comparative pricing and availability information associated with desired goods and services.

15
Another important feature of the system and method of the present invention is the name linking system, which automatically and logically associates a domain name requested (e.g., ineedahotelroom.com) with a family of logically-related domain names associated with the system (e.g., ineeddirections.net, ineedtogettickets.com, ineedaguide.net, ineedawakeupcall.com, etc.). Accordingly, the system allows a consumer

to be provided with suggested goods and services most likely to be of immediate use or relevance, while allowing the providers of logically-related goods and services to specifically target such goods and services to the consumer.

It is noted that another feature of the name linking policy allows a consumer to predetermine the level of relationship between the consumer's name request and the provider(s) identified by the system (*i.e.*, how tightly the system relates providers identified in response to a request by the consumers) and otherwise set personal preferences for the way in which the system provides that consumer with information in response to a request. For example, one consumer could desire to see only "highly" relevant providers in response to his name request, while another could desire that providers be identified which are merely loosely related to the domain name request entered. In the former, a consumer who entered the system using the name request "ineedabank.com" might only be provided with online providers of banking services (*e.g.*, www.wingspan.com). In response to the same name request (ineedabank.com), the latter consumer might be provided not only providers of online banking services, but might also be presented with providers of mutual fund services, stock trading services, certified public accountants and investment counseling services. Another example of a predetermined relationship capable of customizing information provided by the system to the consumer is where a consumer limits responses

by the system to a specific geographical area, in which case the former consumer listed above would be presented only with providers of banking services within the predetermined geographical location.

5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995
1000
1005
1010
1015
1020
1025
1030
1035
1040
1045
1050
1055
1060
1065
1070
1075
1080
1085
1090
1095
1100
1105
1110
1115
1120
1125
1130
1135
1140
1145
1150
1155
1160
1165
1170
1175
1180
1185
1190
1195
1200
1205
1210
1215
1220
1225
1230
1235
1240
1245
1250
1255
1260
1265
1270
1275
1280
1285
1290
1295
1300
1305
1310
1315
1320
1325
1330
1335
1340
1345
1350
1355
1360
1365
1370
1375
1380
1385
1390
1395
1400
1405
1410
1415
1420
1425
1430
1435
1440
1445
1450
1455
1460
1465
1470
1475
1480
1485
1490
1495
1500
1505
1510
1515
1520
1525
1530
1535
1540
1545
1550
1555
1560
1565
1570
1575
1580
1585
1590
1595
1600
1605
1610
1615
1620
1625
1630
1635
1640
1645
1650
1655
1660
1665
1670
1675
1680
1685
1690
1695
1700
1705
1710
1715
1720
1725
1730
1735
1740
1745
1750
1755
1760
1765
1770
1775
1780
1785
1790
1795
1800
1805
1810
1815
1820
1825
1830
1835
1840
1845
1850
1855
1860
1865
1870
1875
1880
1885
1890
1895
1900
1905
1910
1915
1920
1925
1930
1935
1940
1945
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
1985
1990
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
2025
2030
2035
2040
2045
2050
2055
2060
2065
2070
2075
2080
2085
2090
2095
2100
2105
2110
2115
2120
2125
2130
2135
2140
2145
2150
2155
2160
2165
2170
2175
2180
2185
2190
2195
2200
2205
2210
2215
2220
2225
2230
2235
2240
2245
2250
2255
2260
2265
2270
2275
2280
2285
2290
2295
2300
2305
2310
2315
2320
2325
2330
2335
2340
2345
2350
2355
2360
2365
2370
2375
2380
2385
2390
2395
2400
2405
2410
2415
2420
2425
2430
2435
2440
2445
2450
2455
2460
2465
2470
2475
2480
2485
2490
2495
2500
2505
2510
2515
2520
2525
2530
2535
2540
2545
2550
2555
2560
2565
2570
2575
2580
2585
2590
2595
2600
2605
2610
2615
2620
2625
2630
2635
2640
2645
2650
2655
2660
2665
2670
2675
2680
2685
2690
2695
2700
2705
2710
2715
2720
2725
2730
2735
2740
2745
2750
2755
2760
2765
2770
2775
2780
2785
2790
2795
2800
2805
2810
2815
2820
2825
2830
2835
2840
2845
2850
2855
2860
2865
2870
2875
2880
2885
2890
2895
2900
2905
2910
2915
2920
2925
2930
2935
2940
2945
2950
2955
2960
2965
2970
2975
2980
2985
2990
2995
3000
3005
3010
3015
3020
3025
3030
3035
3040
3045
3050
3055
3060
3065
3070
3075
3080
3085
3090
3095
3100
3105
3110
3115
3120
3125
3130
3135
3140
3145
3150
3155
3160
3165
3170
3175
3180
3185
3190
3195
3200
3205
3210
3215
3220
3225
3230
3235
3240
3245
3250
3255
3260
3265
3270
3275
3280
3285
3290
3295
3300
3305
3310
3315
3320
3325
3330
3335
3340
3345
3350
3355
3360
3365
3370
3375
3380
3385
3390
3395
3400
3405
3410
3415
3420
3425
3430
3435
3440
3445
3450
3455
3460
3465
3470
3475
3480
3485
3490
3495
3500
3505
3510
3515
3520
3525
3530
3535
3540
3545
3550
3555
3560
3565
3570
3575
3580
3585
3590
3595
3600
3605
3610
3615
3620
3625
3630
3635
3640
3645
3650
3655
3660
3665
3670
3675
3680
3685
3690
3695
3700
3705
3710
3715
3720
3725
3730
3735
3740
3745
3750
3755
3760
3765
3770
3775
3780
3785
3790
3795
3800
3805
3810
3815
3820
3825
3830
3835
3840
3845
3850
3855
3860
3865
3870
3875
3880
3885
3890
3895
3900
3905
3910
3915
3920
3925
3930
3935
3940
3945
3950
3955
3960
3965
3970
3975
3980
3985
3990
3995
4000
4005
4010
4015
4020
4025
4030
4035
4040
4045
4050
4055
4060
4065
4070
4075
4080
4085
4090
4095
4100
4105
4110
4115
4120
4125
4130
4135
4140
4145
4150
4155
4160
4165
4170
4175
4180
4185
4190
4195
4200
4205
4210
4215
4220
4225
4230
4235
4240
4245
4250
4255
4260
4265
4270
4275
4280
4285
4290
4295
4300
4305
4310
4315
4320
4325
4330
4335
4340
4345
4350
4355
4360
4365
4370
4375
4380
4385
4390
4395
4400
4405
4410
4415
4420
4425
4430
4435
4440
4445
4450
4455
4460
4465
4470
4475
4480
4485
4490
4495
4500
4505
4510
4515
4520
4525
4530
4535
4540
4545
4550
4555
4560
4565
4570
4575
4580
4585
4590
4595
4600
4605
4610
4615
4620
4625
4630
4635
4640
4645
4650
4655
4660
4665
4670
4675
4680
4685
4690
4695
4700
4705
4710
4715
4720
4725
4730
4735
4740
4745
4750
4755
4760
4765
4770
4775
4780
4785
4790
4795
4800
4805
4810
4815
4820
4825
4830
4835
4840
4845
4850
4855
4860
4865
4870
4875
4880
4885
4890
4895
4900
4905
4910
4915
4920
4925
4930
4935
4940
4945
4950
4955
4960
4965
4970
4975
4980
4985
4990
4995
5000
5005
5010
5015
5020
5025
5030
5035
5040
5045
5050
5055
5060
5065
5070
5075
5080
5085
5090
5095
5100
5105
5110
5115
5120
5125
5130
5135
5140
5145
5150
5155
5160
5165
5170
5175
5180
5185
5190
5195
5200
5205
5210
5215
5220
5225
5230
5235
5240
5245
5250
5255
5260
5265
5270
5275
5280
5285
5290
5295
5300
5305
5310
5315
5320
5325
5330
5335
5340
5345
5350
5355
5360
5365
5370
5375
5380
5385
5390
5395
5400
5405
5410
5415
5420
5425
5430
5435
5440
5445
5450
5455
5460
5465
5470
5475
5480
5485
5490
5495
5500
5505
5510
5515
5520
5525
5530
5535
5540
5545
5550
5555
5560
5565
5570
5575
5580
5585
5590
5595
5600
5605
5610
5615
5620
5625
5630
5635
5640
5645
5650
5655
5660
5665
5670
5675
5680
5685
5690
5695
5700
5705
5710
5715
5720
5725
5730
5735
5740
5745
5750
5755
5760
5765
5770
5775
5780
5785
5790
5795
5800
5805
5810
5815
5820
5825
5830
5835
5840
5845
5850
5855
5860
5865
5870
5875
5880
5885
5890
5895
5900
5905
5910
5915
5920
5925
5930
5935
5940
5945
5950
5955
5960
5965
5970
5975
5980
5985
5990
5995
6000
6005
6010
6015
6020
6025
6030
6035
6040
6045
6050
6055
6060
6065
6070
6075
6080
6085
6090
6095
6100
6105
6110
6115
6120
6125
6130
6135
6140
6145
6150
6155
6160
6165
6170
6175
6180
6185
6190
6195
6200
6205
6210
6215
6220
6225
6230
6235
6240
6245
6250
6255
6260
6265
6270
6275
6280
6285
6290
6295
6300
6305
6310
6315
6320
6325
6330
6335
6340
6345
6350
6355
6360
6365
6370
6375
6380
6385
6390
6395
6400
6405
6410
6415
6420
6425
6430
6435
6440
6445
6450
6455
6460
6465
6470
6475
6480
6485
6490
6495
6500
6505
6510
6515
6520
6525
6530
6535
6540
6545
6550
6555
6560
6565
6570
6575
6580
6585
6590
6595
6600
6605
6610
6615
6620
6625
6630
6635
6640
6645
6650
6655
6660
6665
6670
6675
6680
6685
6690
6695
6700
6705
6710
6715
6720
6725
6730
6735
6740
6745
6750
6755
6760
6765
6770
6775
6780
6785
6790
6795
6800
6805
6810
6815
6820
6825
6830
6835
6840
6845
6850
6855
6860
6865
6870
6875
6880
6885
6890
6895
6900
6905
6910
6915
6920
6925
6930
6935
6940
6945
6950
6955
6960
6965
6970
6975
6980
6985
6990
6995
7000
7005
7010
7015
7020
7025
7030
7035
7040
7045
7050
7055
7060
7065
7070
7075
7080
7085
7090
7095
7100
7105
7110
7115
7120
7125
7130
7135
7140
7145
7150
7155
7160
7165
7170
7175
7180
7185
7190
7195
7200
7205
7210
7215
7220
7225
7230
7235
7240
7245
7250
7255
7260
7265
7270
7275
7280
7285
7290
7295
7300
7305
7310
7315
7320
7325
7330
7335
7340
7345
7350
7355
7360
7365
7370
7375
7380
7385
7390
7395
7400
7405
7410
7415
7420
7425
7430
7435
7440
7445
7450
7455
7460
7465
7470
7475
7480
7485
7490
7495
7500
7505
7510
7515
7520
7525
7530
7535
7540
7545
7550
7555
7560
7565
7570
7575
7580
7585
7590
7595
7600
7605
7610
7615
7620
7625
7630
7635
7640
7645
7650
7655
7660
7665
7670
7675
7680
7685
7690
7695
7700
7705
7710
7715
7720
7725
7730
7735
7740
7745
7750
7755
7760
7765
7770
7775
7780
7785
7790
7795
7800
7805
7810
7815
7820
7825
7830
7835
7840
7845
7850
7855
7860
7865
7870
7875
7880
7885
7890
7895
7900
7905
7910
7915
7920
7925
7930
7935
7940
7945
7950
7955
7960
7965
7970
7975
7980
7985
7990
7995
8000
8005
8010
8015
8020
8025
8030
8035
8040
8045
8050
8055
8060
8065
8070
8075
8080
8085
8090
8095
8100
8105
8110
8115
8120
8125
8130
8135
8140
8145
8150
8155
8160
8165
8170
8175
8180
8185
8190
8195
8200
8205
8210
8215
8220
8225
8230
8235
8240
8245
8250
8255
8260
8265
8270
8275
8280
8285
8290
8295
8300
8305
8310
8315
8320
8325
8330
8335
8340
8345
8350
8355
8360
8365
8370
8375
8380
8385
8390
8395
8400
8405
8410
8415
8420
8425
8430
8435
8440
8445
8450
8455
8460
8465
8470
8475
8480
8485
8490
8495
8500
8505
8510
8515
8520
8525
8530
8535
8540
8545
8550
8555
8560
8565
8570
8575
8580
8585
8590
8595
8600
8605
8610
8615
8620
8625
8630
8635
8640
8645
8650
8655
8660
8665
8670
8675
8680
8685
8690
8695
8700
8705
8710
8715
8720
8725
8730
8735
8740
8745
8750
8755
8760
8765
8770
8775
8780
8785
8790
8795
8800
8805
8810
8815
8820
8825
8830
8835
8840
8845
8850
8855
8860
8865
8870
8875
8880
8885
8890
8895
8900
8905
8910
8915
8920
8925
8930
8935
8940
8945
8950
8955
8960
8965
8970
8975
8980
8985
8990
8995
9000
9005
9010
9015
9020
9025
9030
9035
9040
9045
9050
9055
9060
9065
9070
9075
9080
9085
9090
9095
9100
9105
9110
9115
9120
9125
9130
9135
9140
9145
9150
9155
9160
9165
9170
9175
9180
9185
9190
9195
9200
9205
9210
9215
9220
9225
9230
9235
9240
9245
9250
9255
9260
9265
9270
9275
9280
9285
9290
9295
9300
9305
9310
9315
9320
9325
9330
9335
9340
9345
9350
9355
9360
9365
9370
9375
9380
9385
9390
9395
9400
9405
9410
9415
9420
9425
9430
9435
9440
9445
9450
9455
9460
9465
9470
9475
9480
9485
9490
9495
9500
9505
9510
9515
9520
9525
9530
9535
9540
9545
9550
9555
9560
9565
9570
9575
9580
9585
9590
9595
9600
9605
9610
9615
9620
9625
9630
9635
9640
9645
9650
9655
9660
9665
9670
9675
9680
9685
9690
9695
9700
9705
9710
9715
9720
9725
9730
9735
9740
9745
9750
9755
9760
9765
9770
9775
9780
9785
9790
9795
9800
9805
9810
9815
9820
9825
9830
9835
9840
9845
9850
9855
9860
9865
9870
9875
9880
9885
9890
9895
9900
9905
9910
9915
9920
9925
9930
9935
9940
9945
9950
9955
9960
9965
9970
9975
9980
9985
9990
9995
10000
10005
10010
10015
10020
10025
10030
10035
10040
10045
10050
10055
10060
10065
10070
10075
10080
10085
10090
10095
10100
10105
10110
10115
10120
10125
10130
10135
10140
10145
10150
10155
10160
10165
10170
10175
10180
10185
10190
10195
10200
10205
10210
10215
10220
10225
10230
10235
10240
10245
10250
10255
10260
10265
10270
10275
10280
10285
10290
10295
10300
10305
10310
10315
10320
10325
10330

5
10
with any number of providers (selected by the service in response to a name request or otherwise selected) without requiring the customer to separately provide each such provider with such information. Another service would be the inclusion of an anonymous browser within the system. Such an anonymous browser would provide the consumer with the ability to override the system's specific, logistically-related matching operability and casually browse web sites, viewing all of the content (graphics, photographs, video, extended menus, etc.) available on such sites, but preferably eliminated from the primary matching functions of the system. "Cookies" retained by the system's server(s) would facilitate operation of such a browser service. A third such service will include the availability of an intra-system search engine feature associated with each site in the system through which all other web presences of the system can be easily and quickly reached.

15
The system's ability to specifically and logically match online consumers and providers of goods and services, and facilitate business transactions between them, allows the system to operate significantly more efficiently (*i.e.*, using less bandwidth) and quickly, thus making the system of the present invention idea for use with non-traditional global communication network access devices, such as pagers, hand-held personal communications devices and future Internet communication devices. Emerging communication technologies (*e.g.*, voice recognition and activation) are also supported and

The system of the present invention is capable of generating revenue through any number of known (or hereinafter developed) revenue models, including, without limitation, transactional fee sharing, advertising fees and link referral partnering.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete understanding of the method and system of the present invention may be had by reference to the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram illustrating the basic components of an exemplary system of the present invention; and

FIGURE 2 is a simplified flowchart illustrating the basic steps of a preferred method of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Referring to the Drawings, wherein like numerals represent like parts throughout FIGURES 1-2, there are disclosed an exemplary system 150 and a preferred method 200 in accordance with the present invention.

Referring to FIGURES 1 and 2, there are a block diagram illustrating the basic components of the system 150 and a flowchart illustrating the basic steps of the method 200 in accordance with the present invention. The system 150 and method 200 are both used in conjunction with a global communications network (*e.g.*, the Internet) 100 of which many details are known in the industry and as such need not be described herein. Therefore, for clarity, the description provided below in relation to the Internet 100 omits components not necessary to understand the present invention.

The system 150 operates as an intermediary between consumers 102 (only one shown) and providers 104a, 104b and 104c (only three shown) of goods and services so that they can effectively be paired so as to conduct business with one another. As previously noted, such "consumers" encompass both individual users and business ventures or enterprises of all types. To do this the system 150 operates to intelligently select the names of one or more of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c from which the consumer 102

can choose a particular provider with whom a dialogue can be established via the Internet 100 or otherwise. The system 150 utilizes a request from the consumer 102 via any communications means known or hereinafter invented, and a name linking policy to intelligently select the names of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c. In addition, the system 150 operates to provide the consumer 102 and the providers 104a, 104b and 104c with a variety of other useful services, all of which facilitate any business transaction desired between the parties. Such services are described in detail below.

Now referring to FIGURE 2, beginning at step 202 the consumer 102 (e.g., member or customer) inputs information to be stored in a database 106 of the system 150. Typically, the consumer 102 inputs the information prior to communicating with any of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c, but could also input such information at a different time. The type of information that is stored within the database 106 may include the personal preferences, payment instructions, personal identification information and privacy instructions of the consumer 102. Details associated with the personal preferences, payment instructions and privacy instructions are described in greater detail below. It is noted that it is neither necessary for every consumer 102 to enter all of the information noted above and described below to use the system 150, nor must the consumer 102 enter such information at any particular point in its use of the system 150. One notable

advantage of this feature of the system 150 is that the database 106 is continually and automatically updated with use of the system 150 by the consumer 102 such that the consumer's most-relevant personal information, payment instructions, personal purchasing preferences and the like are always available for use by the system 150.

At step 204, the system 150 operates to receive a request initiated by the consumer 102 and transmitted through the Internet 100 or other communication device (*e.g.*, pager, personal communication device). The request is preferably in a common format of a universal resource locator ("URL") or domain name (*e.g.*, INEEDxxx.COM, wherein "xxx" is subject matter object-oriented) which is part of a whole family of domain names in such format (*e.g.*, INEEDNEWS.NET, INEEDTOBUYACAR.COM and INEEDA401K.COM) that have been registered by the system 150. Each of the domain names includes a common domain name component (*e.g.*, INEED) which has a common string of characters that is either intuitive to, or can be easily remembered by, the consumer 102. Thus, the consumer 102 only needs to add the desired object (*e.g.*, "NEWS", "TOBUYACAR" OR "A401K") of interest to the common domain name component and submit the domain name via browser, pager or the like to the system 150. As mentioned above, since the system 150 optimally includes the two major, commercial top-level extensions (.com and .net) for each domain name in the system 150 and further includes an internal search

mechanism capable of quickly identifying any other domain in the system 150, it does not matter which extension is used by a consumer 102 in a request once the consumer has reached any domain within the system. Technical pointers and the internal search mechanism are used by the system 150 to re-route, if necessary, a consumer 102 to the system's appropriate web presence.

Now referring to FIGURE 1, the family of domain names is maintained by a server 108 (e.g., workstation) which is also a component of the system 150. The server 108 is coupled to the database 106 through a network that can be configured, for example, as a Local Area Network 110. In addition, the system 150 may include a fire wall 112 positioned between the Internet 100 and the Local Area Network 110 to provide protection against unwanted intrusion or access into the system.

At step 206 of FIGURE 2, the system 150 uses a name linking policy 109 and the received request (e.g., INEEDABOOK.COM) to identify at least one of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c in response to the received request. The name linking policy 109 (e.g., name linking module) can be stored within the server 108 or at a remote location. In selecting the names of the providers 104a, 104b or 104c, the name linking policy 109 can use subject matter information (e.g., BOOK) derived from the request (e.g., INEEDABOOK.COM) along with geographic information, demographic information, and

the personal preferences of the consumer 102 to generate a customized response to the request.

5
10
15
The geographic information typically indicates the home location (from the personal identification information) current location (from the request, IP address provided, or GPS technology), or future location (from the request) of the consumer 102, which enables the system 150 to intelligently select the providers 104a, 104b or 104c located within the geographic area of interest to the consumer 102, to optionally select providers of related goods and services for the consumer 102. There are a number of ways that the system 150 can determine the geographical location of the consumer 102. For example, the consumer 102 may simply provide the geographic information to the system 150. Alternatively, the system 150 can obtain the geographic information from a mobile communications system (not shown) if the consumer 102 happens to be using a mobile telephone or a digital terminal equipment (DTE) to contact the system. It is noted that, although not commonly utilized at this time, it is possible to technologically determine the geographic location of a user of the Internet merely through such usage. Such capability is likely to be used more extensively in the near future as these and other location-identification technologies (*e.g.*, GPS) further advance, and is contemplated by the present invention.

5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995
1000

The demographic information can be provided by the consumer 102 at the same time the consumer inputs his personal preferences into the database 106 (see step 202). The personal preference information can include a list of providers with whom the consumer 102 likes or desires not to have a business relationship. For instance, the consumer 102 may like staying at the Marriott® or the Sheraton® while in Boston and the Anatole® Hotel or the Fairmont® Hotel while in Dallas, and in no city does the consumer like to stay at a Motel Six®. It should be understood that the personal preferences and demographic information submitted by the consumer 102 can include all types of special requests and data which will assist the system 150 in intelligently responding to a consumer request. Additionally, as with all information tracked by the database 106, geographic information about the consumer 102 is continually and automatically updated with use of the system 150 by the consumer 102.

As an illustrative example of the operation of the name linking policy 109, the consumer 102 may need to rent a car while on a business trip in Dallas and as such would access the Internet and transmit a request to the system by entering the domain name of "ineedto rentacar.com". In response, the system 150 determines that the consumer 102 desires to rent a car simply by looking at the subject matter portion of the request or that the consumer has directly accessed the domain. Next, the name linking policy 109 selects

the names of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c that rent cars in Dallas while also using the personal preferences (e.g., consumer is a Hertz #1 Gold® member and dislikes Dollar Rent-A-Car®) and the geographic information (e.g., via GPS technology or itinerary information present via the common database of the system) of the consumer 102 to further refine the response. In addition to selecting the providers 104a, 104b and 104c that rent cars in Dallas, the name linking policy 109 can also select the names of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c offering goods or services that may be of interest to consumer 102 that is renting a car in Dallas. For instance, the name linking policy 109 may select the names of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c that provide goods and services in the Dallas area related to, for example, entertainment, restaurants, airports, and hotels.

In a preferred embodiment, the name linking policy 109 generally selects the names of providers 104a, 104b and 104c that have previously agreed to be a partner with programs initiated by the system 150. On the other hand, in another embodiment the name linking policy 109 can also select the names of providers 104a, 104b and 104c that have no prior relationship with the system 150. The providers 104a, 104b and 104c can include the providers 104a that have their own web page on the Internet 100, the providers 104b that do not have a web page but instead has electronic mail or other, more traditional contact information (e.g., a telephone number, fax number, store address), and the

5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
105
110
115
120
125
130
135
140
145
150
155
160
165
170
175
180
185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
225
230
235
240
245
250
255
260
265
270
275
280
285
290
295
300
305
310
315
320
325
330
335
340
345
350
355
360
365
370
375
380
385
390
395
400
405
410
415
420
425
430
435
440
445
450
455
460
465
470
475
480
485
490
495
500
505
510
515
520
525
530
535
540
545
550
555
560
565
570
575
580
585
590
595
600
605
610
615
620
625
630
635
640
645
650
655
660
665
670
675
680
685
690
695
700
705
710
715
720
725
730
735
740
745
750
755
760
765
770
775
780
785
790
795
800
805
810
815
820
825
830
835
840
845
850
855
860
865
870
875
880
885
890
895
900
905
910
915
920
925
930
935
940
945
950
955
960
965
970
975
980
985
990
995

providers 104c that are directly associated with the system 150. In a preferred embodiment, the system 150 would select the names of providers 104a, 104b and 104c that are partners with the system such that information can be provided and transactions completed between the providers 104a, 104b and 104c and the consumer 102 in a seamless manner previously described. The system 150 could also rank or otherwise provide information to the consumer 102 about the providers 104a, 104b and 104c based upon prior consumer satisfaction, relative pricing and the like.

At step 208, the system 150 operates to create and customize a seamless means of connecting the consumer 102 with the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c. In a preferred embodiment, a customized web page is generated which contains detailed information (*e.g.*, comparative pricing and availability) about the desired goods and/or services of the providers 104a, 104b and 104c that were selected by the name linking policy 109 (see step 206) in response to a request. The customized web page can be in a format chosen by the consumer 102 (either as part of the personal preference information or as each response is generated by the system 150), wherein, for example, the selected web page may not include all the advertising generally associated with the web pages of traditional search engines or would rank the providers selected by one or more factors (*e.g.*, price or reputation). The seamless experience provided by the system is accomplished, in

part, by technologically-advanced programming options, such as mark up languages capable of fluid and flexible treatment of structure content, like XML.

At step 210, the system 150 operates to present, by way of the Internet 100, the customized web page or Wireless Application Protocol or other presentation format to the consumer 102. Importantly, regardless of the consumer's route of entry to the system (*e.g.*, computer, pager, cellular telephone, hand-held personal communication device), the system will recognize the consumer (if that consumer has previously used the system) and will present a consistent and seamless experience to said consumer based upon the information available from the common database.

At step 212, the system 150 operates as an intermediary between the consumer 102 and the chosen provider 104a, 104b or 104c so that they can effectively conduct business with one another. In functioning as an intermediary, as described in greater detail below the system 150 enables the consumer 102 to identify, comparatively price, check availability and purchase the goods and services offered by the chosen providers 104a, 104b and 104c. In a preferred embodiment, the consumer 102 can simply transact business with one or more of the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c through the customized web page. This manner of interaction is preferred since it: (1) provides the consumer 102 a single, customized format for the provision of detailed information about

the desired goods and/or services of the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c; (2) provides the consumer 102 a familiar, customized format in which to transact business with the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c; (3) provides the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c with selected (discussed below) and specific (discussed below) information about the consumer 102 to facilitate business transactions between the parties; and (4) boosts sales of the goods and services of the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c by the consumer 102 who is unwilling or unable to learn the often foreign and confusing functions, look and feel of the sites of the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c.

The system 150 allows the consumer 102 to interact with the chosen providers 104a and 104c in accordance with the stored privacy instructions (see step 202). The stored privacy instructions can direct the system 150 to make the consumer's information (*e.g.*, identity and e-mail address) freely available to the providers 104a, 104b and 104c. Alternatively, the stored privacy instructions can direct the system 150 to keep the consumer's information from the providers 104a, 104b and 104c, or to make the consumer's information available only when authorized by the consumer 102. Of course, this enables the consumer 102 to have control of their "private information" when communicating over the very public Internet 100.

Moreover, in the preferred embodiment the system 150 operates to enable the consumer 102 to directly purchase the goods or services offered by the chosen providers 104a, 104b and 104c through the customized web page or Wireless Application Protocol or other presentation formats generated by the system 150. To accomplish this the consumer 102 can choose to allow the system 150 to act as the intermediary between the consumer and chosen providers 104a, 104b and 104c in accordance with the stored privacy instructions (discussed above) and the stored payment instructions (see step 202) as described below. Alternatively, in another, less preferred embodiment of the system and method of the present invention, the consumer 102 can simply call or otherwise contact the chosen provider 104a, 104b or 104c using the contact information provided by the system 150 and complete the transaction in one or more traditional manners.

In a preferred embodiment, the stored payment instructions can direct the system 150 to furnish, at the time of each transaction, the chosen providers 104a, 104b and 104c with a stored debit or credit card number of the consumer 102. This payment instruction allows for the payment of goods and services without requiring the consumer 102 to enter his debit or credit card number during each transaction. If desired for privacy purposes, the system 150 can also complete the consumer's transaction without directly providing payment or other information about the consumer to the provider(s). Examples of such

additional protective measures include, but are not limited to: (1) completion of transactions for the consumer 102 using a card number assigned to the system 150 which then automatically rebills the account of the consumer 102; and (2) utilization of contractual payment arrangements between the system 150 and the providers (e.g., the system 150 automatically cuts a check to the provider(s) under prearranged terms and conditions).

In another embodiment, the consumer 102 may choose one or more of the selected providers 104a, 104b and 104c that he desires to contact outside the customized web page. To contact the providers 104a, 104b and 104c, the consumer 102 can select the domain name of the chosen provider's web page via an electronic link (e.g., hot link) or simply call or otherwise contact the chosen provider in order to identify, compare and purchase the wanted goods or services.

At step 214, the system 150 further operates to track and provide rewards based on the type and number of transactions made by the consumer 102 over a given time period. This service not only rewards loyalty of consumers 102 to the system 150, but provides the system 150 with invaluable consumer-spending information which can be utilized to improve the system 150 and the selection of providers in response to consumer requests.

At step 216, the system 150 can operate to maintain a rating corresponding to the satisfaction level of one or more of the consumers 102. The rating can be a customer rating related to the quality of goods or services provided by a particular provider and can be used by other components of the system 150 to classify providers in response to requests.

In addition, the system 150 can provide a variety of other useful services including (for example): (1) lost and found notification; (2) separated luggage tracking; (3) loyalty program tracking; (4) service upgrade management services; (5) itinerary reports; (6) expense reports; (7) insurance claims processing; (8) calendars; (9) warranty registration services; (10) complaint services; (11) concierge services; (12) bill tracking and payment services; (13) news and sports information; (14) various cultural services; (15) customized traffic and weather reports; and (16) any array of e-mail, facsimile, voice, voice mail, video and video conference communications services.

The system 150 can generate revenue for an operator of the system 150 in one or a number of ways. For example, the system 150 may require providers who wish to be associated with the system 150 to pay to the system 150 a small percentage of each transaction such provider completes which came to the provider through the system 150. The system 150 could also generate income by charging the consumer 102 a small (set or percentage) fee associated with each request response generated by the system 150 for the

15

34

Although several embodiments of the system and method of the present invention have been illustrated in the accompanying Drawings and described in the foregoing Detailed Description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiment disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions without departing from the spirit of the invention as set forth and defined by the following claims.